

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION

**REPORT
TO THE**

1977

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA



SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION
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JANUARY 12, 1977

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 1977 GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

The Legislative Research Commission herewith reports to the 1977 General Assembly of North Carolina on the matter of Services for the Blind. The report is made pursuant to House Bill 296 of the 1975 General Assembly.

This report was prepared by the Legislative Research Commission Committee on Services for the Blind, and it is transmitted by the Legislative Research Commission to the members of the 1977 General Assembly for their consideration.

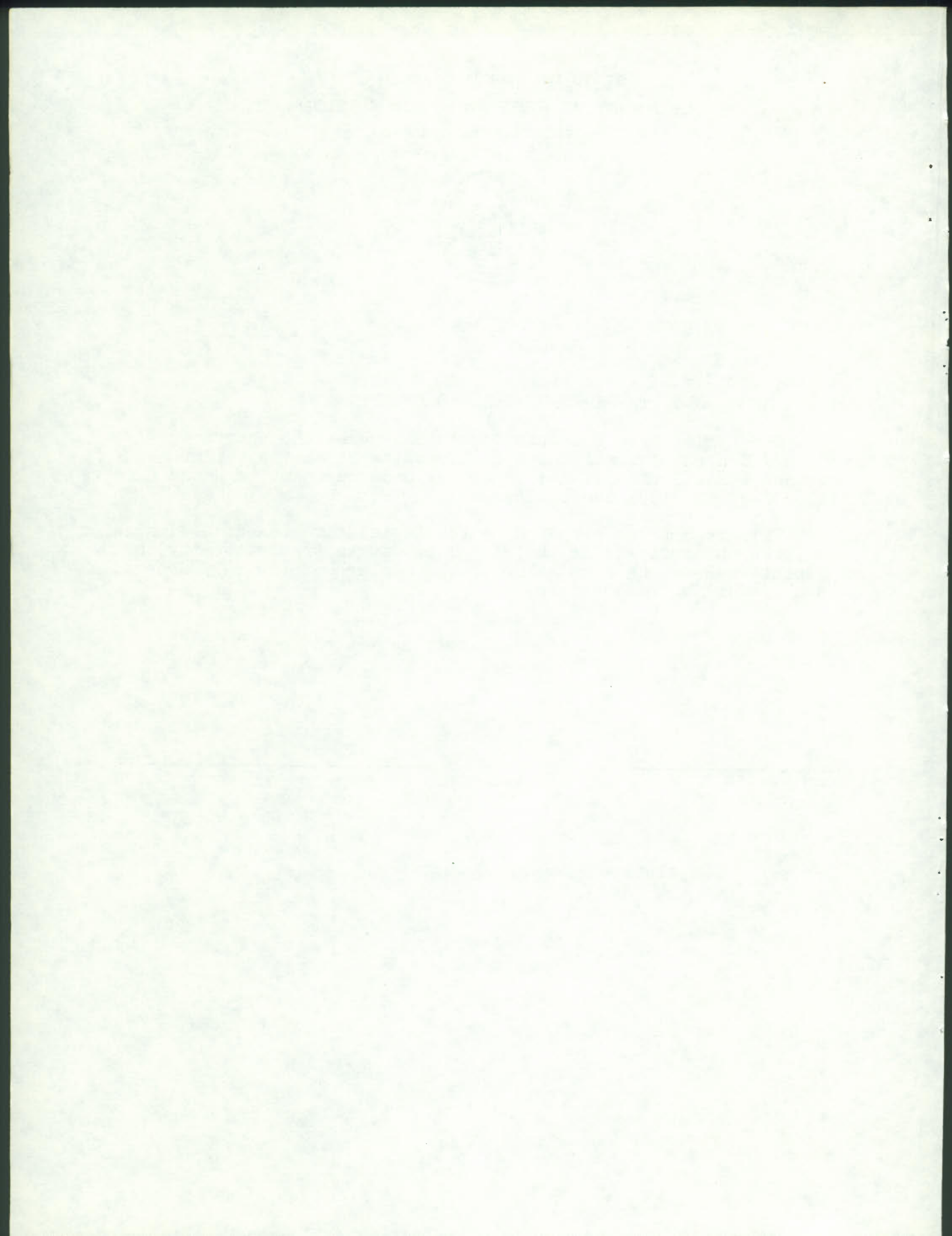
Respectively submitted,

John T. Henley

James C. Green

Co-Chairmen

Legislative Research Commission



GENERAL STATUTES OF NORTH CAROLINA

CH. 120. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ARTICLE 6B.

Legislative Research Commission,

§ 120-30.10. Creation; appointment of members; members ex officio. — (a) There is hereby created a Legislative Research Commission to consist of five Senators to be appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate and five Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House. The President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall be ex officio members of the Legislative Research Commission. Provided, that when the President of the Senate has been elected by the Senate from its own membership, then the President of the Senate shall make the appointments of the Senate members of the Legislative Research Commission, shall serve ex officio as a member of the Commission and shall perform the duties otherwise vested in the President pro tempore by G.S. 120-30.13 and 120-30.14.

(b) The cochairmen of the Legislative Research Commission may appoint additional members of the General Assembly to work with the regular members of the Research Commission on study committees. The terms of the additional study committee members shall be limited by the same provisions as apply to regular commission members, and they may be further limited by the appointing authorities.

(c) The cochairmen of the Legislative Research Commission may appoint persons who are not members of the General Assembly to advisory subcommittees. The terms of advisory subcommittee members shall be limited by the same provisions as apply to regular Commission members, and they may be further limited by the appointing authorities. (1965, c. 1045, s. 1; 1975, c. 692, s. 1.)

* * * * *

§ 120-30.17. Powers and duties. — The Legislative Research Commission has the following powers and duties:

- (1) Pursuant to the direction of the General Assembly or either house thereof, or of the chairmen, to make or cause to be made such studies of and investigations into governmental agencies and institutions and matters of public policy as will aid the General Assembly in performing its duties in the most efficient and effective manner.
- (2) To report to the General Assembly the results of the studies made. The reports may be accompanied by the recommendations of the Commission and bills suggested to effectuate the recommendations. (1965, c. 1045, s. 8; 1969, c. 1184, s. 8.)

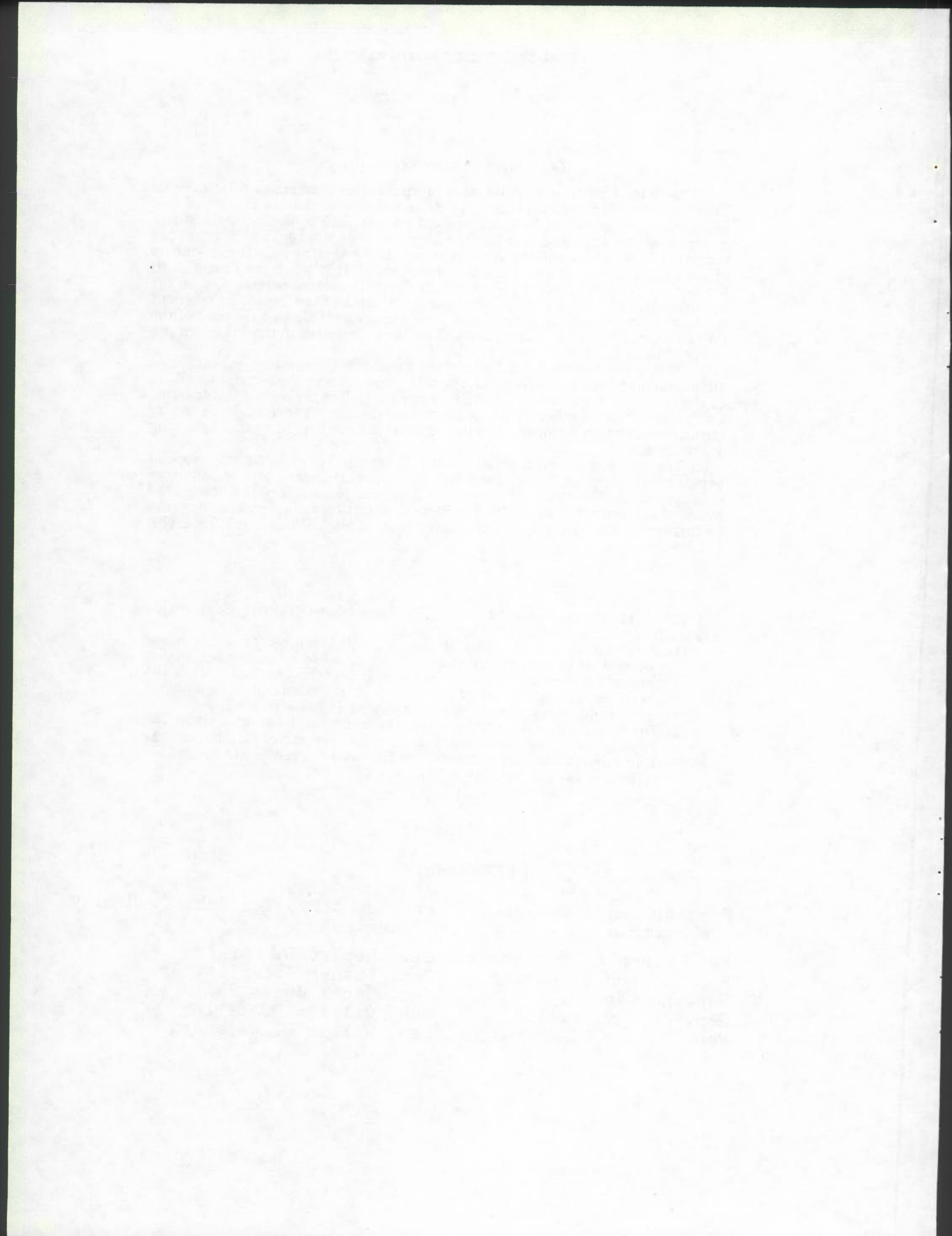
MEMBERSHIP

Speaker James C. Green
Cochairman

President Pro Tem John T. Henley
Cochairman

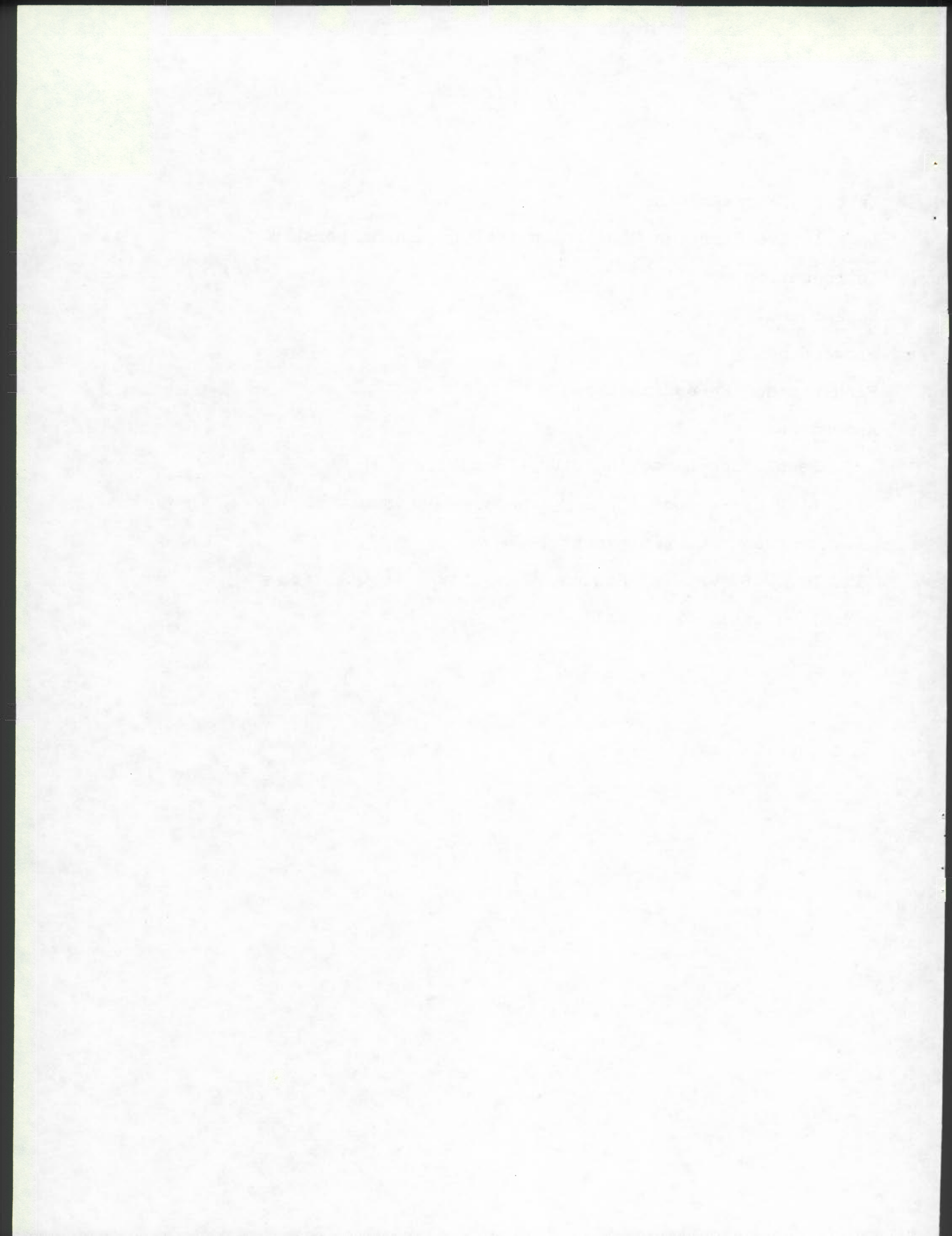
Rep. Glenn A. Morris
Rep. Liston B. Ramsey
Rep. Hector E. Ray
Rep. J. Guy Revelle
Rep. Thomas B. Sawyer

Sen. Robert L. Barker
Sen. Luther J. Britt, Jr.
Sen. Cecil James Hill
Sen. William D. Mills
Sen. Willis P. Whichard



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INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Research Commission, authorized by Article 6B of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes (G.S.), is a general purpose study group whose duties are that of making or causing to be made, upon the direction of the General Assembly, "such studies of and investigations into governmental agencies and institutions and matters of public policy as will aid the General Assembly in performing its duties in the most efficient and effective manner".

By HB 296 (1975 Session Laws, Chapter 851), See Appendix I, The Legislative Research Commission was authorized to undertake a study of services for the blind. The words of the bill directed that the study take into account and "inquire into the current operating practices of the North Carolina Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The study shall embrace: 1. Present services to the blind, 2. Ways of achieving greater effectiveness in rendering services, and 3. Possible expansion and strengthening quality of services to the blind."

In order to accomplish this task, Senator Willis Whichard, as a member of the Commission, was appointed Chairman of the Study of Services for the Blind. Senator Kenneth C. Royall, Jr. and Representative Larry P. Eagles were appointed Co-Chairmen of the Study. The other members appointed were Senators Ollie Harris and Ralph Scott along with Representatives Nancy Chase,

John J. Hunt, John W. Varner and Richard Wright. The Legislative Services Office provided assistance to the Committee for this study.

The persons who appeared before the Committee are listed in Appendix II. The minutes of the Committee Meetings reflect the statements and discussions at each meeting. All of this information is included in the Committee files.

BACKGROUND

As the General Assembly is aware, powerful forces are impacting public agencies that are trying to provide meaningful social and human services. Some of these forces are changing the type of client being served. Others are changing the nature and type of services to be provided. Still others are changing the organizational structure which provided such services as well as the system that delivers these services to the client. It is with this understanding that the Committee began its work in trying to sort out these forces.

The responsibility of government to provide services to the blind is one of the older areas of "human resource" responsibility. The 19th century was an era of pioneering of techniques as well as education of the public. Programs for blind persons seemed to have reached a peak of intensity of client service, operational visibility, and public acceptance.

between the World War II era and the late 1960's. During that period of time, in most states, the programs had political leverage in both the executive as well as the legislative branches of government.

The above statements closely parallel the history of blind services in North Carolina. The North Carolina Lions Association for the Blind was instrumental in securing the services of Miss Helen Keller, an internationally noted and recognized deaf-blind lecturer, to appear in support of legislation before the 1935 General Assembly. This General Assembly then created a state agency entitled the North Carolina State Commission for the Blind. This Commission became the Division of Services for the Blind within the Department of Human Resources in the Reorganization Act of 1973. This study was precipitated through efforts of the National Federation of the Blind of North Carolina in the 1975 Session of the General Assembly. The House Committee on Commissions and Institutions for the Blind and Deaf held hearings on the matter and recommended that a special legislative committee conduct a study of services for the blind.

PROCEEDINGS

The Legislative Research Commission's Committee on Services for the Blind (hereafter referred to as the Committee)

held four meetings during the course of its deliberations. Over a period of about a year the Committee heard from numerous groups and persons. The Committee on Services for the Blind recognized at the initial meeting that the limited budget within which the Committee was required to conduct its deliberations would preclude careful analysis of each of the topics with which it had been charged.

It is interesting to note that there seems to be more volunteer and constituent groups for the blind than for almost any other human service program. These groups that were heard from were the North Carolina Council of the Blind, Committee on Stand Programs, National Federation of the Blind of North Carolina, North Carolina Association of Workers for the Blind, North Carolina Chapter of the American Association of Workers for the Blind, North Carolina Lions Association for the Blind. The Committee also heard from governmental groups such as the Division of Services for the Blind, the Commission for the Blind and the Blind Advisory Committee.

It was recalled by the Committee in its first meeting that the National Federation of the Blind had worked very hard in securing passage of the bill leading to this study. It had been reported to the Committee members that various groups representing the blind might be at odds with each other and with the Division of Services for the Blind. This proved not to be evident in any of the hearings. All parties were

most cooperative in presenting their views but also united in their desire to have the best services for our citizens who are blind.

It was learned that state legislation requires that a register must be kept of legally blind individuals. There are now approximately 12,000 individuals on this register. The National Model Reporting System Area on Blindness estimates that an efficient register will indentify between two-thirds and three-fourths of the blind within the State. According to this statement, there are between 16,560 and 18,630 legally blind individuals in North Carolina.

The next self evident question which the Committee explored was what services were being offered to the North Carolina citizens who are blind. The main service agency is the Division of Services for the Blind and the services and programs they offer are:

1. Medical Eye Care. The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness has established that one-half of all blindness is preventable. This program is designed to provide eye care services for the indigent population, to detect ocular defects and provide services to correct these defects, if possible.
2. Social Services Program. This program is designed to provide services necessary for clients to remain self-sufficient. This program will serve approximately 11,834 individuals this year, 7,455 of which are legally blind.

The other individuals have ocular defects and feel they need counseling to cope with the problems that this loss of vision is causing them.

3. Rehabilitation Program. This program is designed to provide services to the blind and physically impaired. It also provides them with the opportunity to enter employment, or in the case of a housewife or unpaid family worker, relieve another member of the family in order that that member might enter employment. Appendix III shows a breakdown of the categories and numbers of individuals placed into employment for the years 1970-74.

4. Concession Stand Program. It is estimated that the Division will maintain 115 legally blind individuals in employment through this program during the 1976 fiscal year and their average salary will be \$6650 plus fringe benefits.

Because of the programs listed above, it is claimed by the Division of Services for the Blind that this State probably has the most comprehensive work for the blind program in the country within a single agency.

There are other public programs for the blind in North Carolina which include:

1. Governor Morehead School (State School for the Blind)
2. Special Services Section, Services to the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Division of the State Library, Department of Cultural Resources.
3. Programs for the Visually Handicapped, Division of Exceptional Children, Department of Public Instruction.
4. Gallery for the Blind, Division of the Arts (Cultural Resources)

Since some rather serious charges had been postulated by various groups concerning North Carolina services for the blind, the Committee spent the majority of its time listening to and considering those areas of concern presented to the Committee. The following is a synopsis of those concerns:

1. Lack of adequate facilities for the library services for the blind.
2. Lack of state funding for a comprehensive braille and sound recording program.
3. Deficiencies in rehabilitation programs.
 - a. Rehabilitation Center location (Butner)
 - b. Lack of uniform mobility training.
 - c. Underemployment and unemployment of the blind.
 1. Overburden on vocational counselors.
 2. Small number of vocational training opportunities.
 3. Lack of locally based placement specialists.
4. Medical/eye care economic criterion. The eligibility for sight conservation and medical eye care programs is out of date (\$3600 for a family of four).
5. Effectiveness of social work staff.
6. Questions concerning Governor Morehead School. (State expenditures are approximately \$7900 per child)
 - a. Administrative location of the School.
 - b. Teacher certification.
 - c. Quality of curriculum.
7. Lack of state financial support for Concession Stand Program.
8. Questions about the future services for the blind under reorganization.
 - a. The control of funds by the Secretary for Human Resources.
 - b. Lack of effective consumer input.
 - c. Structural effectiveness of the Commission for the Blind, the Blind Advisory Committee and the Professional Advisory Committee.
9. Philosophy and attitude of staff toward blind recipients of services.
 - a. General inconsistency in staff attitudes.
 - b. Custodial and paternalistic treatment which hampers independence.
 - c. Sheltered environment which hampers coping with world.

On a more positive note the Committee inquired of Dr. William B. Waters, Director, Division of Services for the Blind,

where the State ought to be headed in its services and philosophy for the Blind. This response is attached as Appendix IV.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

Following the reorganization of State government in 1973, which placed the Division of Services for the Blind in the Department of Human Resources there was some confusion and uncertainty among the clients and staff concerning the direction and future of the blind programs within North Carolina. It was about this time that the National Federation of the Blind of North Carolina decided to request a study of all services for the blind in North Carolina. This discontent partially stemmed from a fear that the Division of Services for the Blind would be broken apart and various components placed with other agencies.

There seems to be wide acceptance among those testifying before the Committee that the Division and its Director are doing an excellent job for the blind in North Carolina although somewhat hampered by the Human Resources structure. An underlying current among some blind constituent groups is that an independent state agency would be more effective in providing comprehensive services for the blind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Division of Services for the Blind ought to remain as a part of the Department of Human Resources. Although there might have been further chance to prove itself, any attempt to establish an independent state agency would run counter to philosophy of the reorganization of state government and as a consequence should be resisted unless the entire program of reorganization is reexamined. It should be remembered that

reorganization was mandated by the people through constitutional amendment.

The Committee strongly feels that the Division for the Blind should remain wholly intact as a separate division within the Department of Human Resources. Concern has been expressed that the Division might be abolished. There is serious question as to whether, under present statute this Division could be legally abolished by the Secretary of Human Resources. In any event, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly override any executive effort to abolish this Division.

The Committee was most interested in the discussions and materials on the philosophy of blindness. For instance, the official philosophy of the Iowa Commission for the blind depends on the concepts:

- A. That blind people are like other people, with the faults, failings and virtues of other people except they cannot see;
- B. That blind people are capable of performing almost any task sighted people do, provided they have received training in the use of alternative techniques for sight;
- C. That blind people, in order that they may lead productive lives, must be independent and capable of self determination;
- D. That a blind person cannot be truly said to have been rehabilitated until he has become socially independent and is employed and earning sufficient income to support himself.

In contrast to the above there were some hints that in some instances over the years some services had been custodial and paternalistic. These charges were not substantiated by the testimony presented to the Committee.

FINDINGS

The basis of our state program should be a positive philosophy of blindness. The individual should be given all services necessary to function to his fullest potential. Too often the individual who is blind is thought of by many of the public as a "blind man" rather than an individual with certain characteristics, such as high intelligence, overweight, redheaded, tall, etc.

As stated before, services for the blind in North Carolina owe much in its history and development to participation by voluntary associations. This has been shown again by the participation of these groups in the deliberations of the Committee. Therefore, the Committee believes that a program of services for the blind should be developed with consumer group participation. The State should be working not only with consumer groups but with clients rather than for clients. When any agency working with the blind considers itself professional to the extent that it knows what is the best for a person and does not involve that person, the agency is perpetuating itself rather than helping people to help themselves.

RECOMMENDATION

To carry out the Findings listed above, the General Assembly ought to statutorily direct the establishment of a Consumer Advocacy Advisory Committee. The LRC recommends the adoption of the legislative proposal in Appendix V. The proposal would abolish the Blind Advisory Committee and the new Consumer Advocacy Advisory Committee would advise all state boards, commissions and agencies, etc, on the needs of the citizens of North Carolina who are now or will become visually handicapped.

All of the blind constituent groups support this legislation as does the Division of Services for the Blind because they feel it will help to utilize volunteer groups and individuals in a more effective manner.

FINDINGS

In testimony the Committee was told that 50% of blindness is preventable. This fact seems astounding considering the economic and psychological impact upon the State.

RECOMMENDATION

The State should not allow one person to lose his vision when it can be prevented. Therefore, the State should have an educational program that makes the citizens aware of the need for good eye care. Both the Division of Services for the Blind and the Division of Health Services should renew its preventive efforts. The Committee recognizes the great amount of time and effort spent in prevention over the years by voluntary groups such as the Lions and the North Carolina Society for the Prevention of Blindness. The State should not try to duplicate this effort.

FINDINGS

The Governor Morehead School (School for the Blind) is one of the most venerable institutions within our State. It is a pioneer in education for the blind having been in existence over a century. When state government was reorganized in 1973, the Governor Morehead School was placed within the Department of Human Resources. It was brought to the attention of the Committee that since it is an educational institution that it may belong within the Department of Public Instruction. The Committee makes no judgement on this point.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Human Resources and the Superintendent of Public Instruction form a Task Force to consider the best administrative location for the School. While the Committee makes no recommendation as to the location, it is noted that removing the school from the Department of Human Resources would result in fragmentation of services to the blind. Wherever the location, the placement should insure an education for the blind children comparable to that received by their sighted peers. Therefore, it should answer questions concerning curriculum, vocational counseling, teacher qualifications and social adjustments.

FINDINGS

Many of the problems brought to the attention of the Committee were matters of increased financing. Many of them were worthy and of great merit and deserve funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly give serious consideration to funding the following programs if the money is available:

A. Comprehensive In-Service Training and Continuing Educational Program.

A comprehensive in-service training and continuing educational program should be strengthened so that it will enable each person employed by the State in work for the blind to understand the implications of blindness and develop a philosophy that is consistent with the idea that a person who is blind can, with a comprehensive program, achieve his maximum potential.

Such an effort would require an additional staff member to coordinate an in-service training and continuing educational program.

B. Medical/Eye Care Services Economic Criterion

A more liberal economic criterion for medical/eye care services for indigent adults is needed. A family of four can be certified for eye care services now if the family's earnings do not exceed \$3600 plus some special exceptions. The Division of Services for the Blind would like to certify this family if the family's earnings do not exceed \$5500. Of the 497,000 individuals that the Division of Services for the Blind estimates would be eligible for services under this criterion, the Division would reach 106,878 individuals. The economic criterion for adults has not been raised for the last 15 years; and as the standard of living and inflation increases, services for clients requiring eye examinations, treatments and/or surgery decrease.

C. Increased Vocational Placement Services

One of the greatest inadequacies of the Division is the very limited training offered blind persons who wish to be independently employed citizens. The Division is asking for a program that would increase placement into competitive employment. It would increase the numbers of vocational counselors and start a job bank.

D. Business Enterprises Concession Stand Program

This State is one of 11 states that does not, to some degree support with state appropriations the Concession Stand Program. Consequently, we have one of the highest "set aside" rates in the country charged to our present operators. Last year this amounted to 9.9% of gross sales. Federal funds can be used to pay 80% of the cost of equipment for the stands and management services. Because our State does not appropriate the 20% to earn the 80% money, operators who are now working in the program have to pay the State's share of the money each time

we open a new stand. The State should consider paying this 20% match. Management procedures should be improved so that the operators can be more independent of the Division of Services for the Blind. These improvements should cause each operator to earn at least the Federal minimum wage.

E. Communication Systems for the Division's Staff Members and Clients who are Blind

The Division would like to develop a system of communicating through the use of braille and recordings with staff members and clients who are blind. Information is currently sent to these individuals in print, and communicating with these individuals in print is like communicating verbally with a deaf person who cannot read lips.

F. Rehabilitation Center for the Blind

Our State developed one of the first civilian rehabilitation centers for the blind in the country. This center is designed to give adjustment services to rehabilitation clients and is designed to serve approximately 125 clients per year. The main deficiency of this center as expressed by the blind consumer groups is that it is located in a rural area. As a result, we are trying to teach individuals who are blind to live independently in an artificial environment. Individuals who are blind normally migrate to the city and it was a mistake to put the adjustment program in a rural area. We, therefore, must strengthen our ability to provide city mobility lessons to the students at the center. We should investigate the possibility of relocating the center in Raleigh or starting mini centers throughout the State.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 1975
RATIFIED BILL

CHAPTER 851

HOUSE BILL 296

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION TO STUDY
VARIOUS MATTERS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. The Legislative Research Commission is directed to study the following issues, designing the individual study efforts as described in the other sections of this act:

- (1) Services for the blind (H. 296);
- (2) The office of magistrate (H. 720);
- (3) Land records information systems (H. 785);
- (4) North Carolina laws on sex discrimination (H. 845, S. 6);
- (5) Problems in foreclosure law (H. 893);
- (6) Fire and casualty insurance rate regulation (H. 1214);
- (7) State licensing boards (H. 1223);
- (8) Need for compensation of victims of crimes (H. 1202);
- (9) Means to increase the level of professionalism and efficiency of local building inspectors (S. 325);
- (10) The effect of the tax-exempt status of State-owned property upon local government revenue (S. 765); and
- (11) The possibility of State operation of a fisheries training vessel program (S. 855);
- (12) Emergency Medical Care and Services;

- (13) The operation of the North Carolina Department of Correction's Prison Enterprises Division (H. 1265, S. 806);
- (14) Programs available to females committed to the Department of Correction (H. 20, S. 24);
- (15) The need for an actuarial services division within the Department of State Treasurer (H. 331);
- (16) The feasibility of using inmate labor in Department of Correction construction (S.606);
- (17) The problems of the hearing aid business (S. 630);
- (18) The relationship between the Division of Community Colleges and the State Department of Public Instruction (S. 909);
- (19) The problem of sexual assaults in North Carolina (H. 816); and
- (20) The funding, benefits, and operations of the Retirement System (H. 994).

Sec. 2. In its study of services for the blind the Legislative Research Commission shall inquire into the responsibilities for services to the blind of North Carolina, and the current operating practices of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources and North Carolina Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The study shall embrace: (1) present services to the blind, (2) ways of achieving greater effectiveness in rendering services, and (3) possible expansion and strengthening quality of services to the blind.

Sec. 2.5. In its study of emergency medical care and services the Legislative Research Commission shall inquire into

Sec. 15. This act shall become effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified, this the 25th day of June, 1975.

JAMES B. HUNT, JR.

James B. Hunt, Jr.

President of the Senate

JAMES C. GREEN, SR.

James C. Green, Sr.

Speaker of the House of Representatives

APPENDIX II

Persons Appearing Before the Committee)

Dr. William B. Waters, Director
Division of Services for the Blind
Raleigh, North Carolina

Miss Myrtle Garris, President
N. C. Association of Workers for the Blind
Raleigh, North Carolina

Mr. Theodore Bryant, President
N. C. Council of Blind
Durham, North Carolina

Mr. Joe Williams
Commission of Stand Programs, Division of Services for the Blind
Spring Hope, North Carolina

Mrs. Hazel Staley, President
National Federation of the Blind
Charlotte, North Carolina

Mr. Ben Eason, Legislative Chairman
N.C. Chapter of American Association of Workers for the Blind
Raleigh, North Carolina

Mr. Robert Spencer, Executive Director
N.C. Association of Lions for the Blind
Raleigh, North Carolina

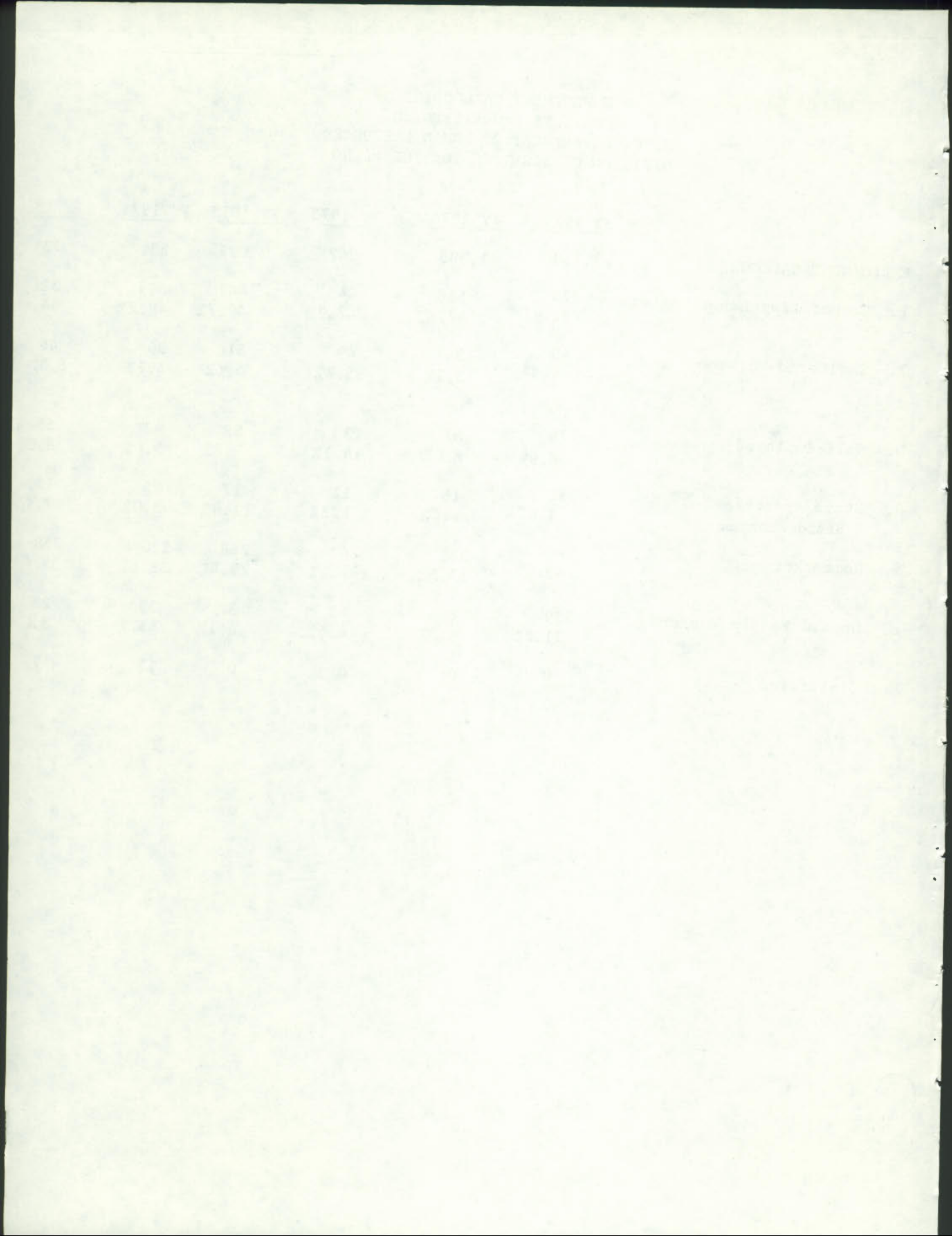
Mr. Robert G. Frye, Chairman
Commission for the Blind
Hickory, North Carolina

Mr. Daniel Taylor, Chairman
Blind Advisory Committee
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Mr. Gene Anthony, Consultant
Programs for the Visually Handicapped
Department of Public Instruction
Raleigh, North Carolina

APPENDIX IIIEMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES OF
CLIENTS REHABILITATED
N. C. DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY	<u>FY 1975</u>	<u>FY 1974</u>	<u>FY 1973</u>	<u>FY 1972</u>	<u>FY 1971</u>	<u>FY 19</u>
	1,150	1,083	942	909	831	731
1. Competitive Labor Market	378 32.9%	516 47.6%	445 47.2%	447 49.2%	399 48.2%	321 44.
2. Sheltered Workshop	49 4.3%	34 3.1%	49 5.2%	51 5.6%	39 4.7%	46 6.37
3. Self-Employed	79 6.9%	87 8.0%	133 14.1%	89 9.8%	48 5.8%	58 8.0
4. State Agency - Stand Program	12 1.0%	15 1.4%	12 1.2%	17 1.9%	25 3.0%	19 2.6
5. Homemaker	503 43.7%	363 33.5%	260 27.6%	268 29.4%	270 32.6%	258 35.4
o. Unpaid Family Worker	129 11.2%	68 6.3%	43 4.5%	37 4.1%	39 4.7%	22 3.0
Not Classified	0	0	0	0	11	7



Question #4 - This question deals with my philosophy, "where we are now and where I would like to see the State go."

My philosophy concerning blindness is that the person who is blind is an individual and that his lack of vision caused by blindness can be a serious handicap unless he is taught techniques and given counseling to develop a positive attitude toward his blindness that will allow him to compensate for his loss of vision. The individual should be given all services necessary to function to his fullest potential. If such a service program is available, his ability to function with proper training will be determined by certain variables just as with a sighted person, including intelligence, aptitude, manual dexterity, emotional stability, physical characteristics, etc. Too often the individual who is blind is thought of by the public as a "blind man" rather than an individual with certain characteristics, such as high intelligence, overweight, redheaded, blind, tall, etc. A comprehensive program of work for the blind will include a program designed to educate the public as well as a program that will enable the individual who is blind to adapt to the sighted world in which he must live. The sighted world will not make extensive adaptations for him; he must be given the services to develop his skills and attitudes to make the world less alien to him.

I believe that a program of services for the blind should be comprehensive in nature and treat the whole individual, not just his vocational needs, his social needs, or his medical needs. These services should be integrated so that the client does not feel that he is receiving fragmented services. I feel that this is one of the strengths of the Division of Services for the Blind in North Carolina since there is no state that has a more comprehensive program than this State does. Such a comprehensive program allows the Division to identify more than twice as many blind individuals on the register for the blind as the State of Virginia which has a population about equal to North Carolina.

A comprehensive program of services should first include a sight conservation and a prevention of blindness program. Fifty percent (50%) of blindness is preventable; and from an economic and psychological standpoint, the State

should not allow one person to lose his vision when it can be prevented. Therefore, the State should have an educational program that makes the citizens aware of the need for good eye care and provide this eye care to the medically indigent person who cannot secure it by himself.

The first step in an individual plan of services should be to restore the individual's vision to the greatest extent possible. If his vision cannot be restored to the point that he can function independently, then adjustment services should be given that will allow him to compensate for his loss of vision. This includes teaching him such communication skills as braille, typing, signature writing, and independent travel techniques. Also, an adjustment program should have a strong "demands of day living" emphasis. This should include teaching the housewife to continue normal activities, such as taking care of her children, cooking, cleaning, etc., and the unpaid family worker to function to his upmost independence in such skills as indicated above. The program should also include family counseling, especially for the parents of children who are born blind, and counseling for the individual who is losing his vision. This State emphasizes the position that the individual who has a progressive eye condition should be started in an adjustment program as soon as possible after his progressive loss of vision is detected. Such a program eliminates much of the trauma which a person goes through while he is losing his vision and is more economical in that habilitation is less expensive than rehabilitation.

If a person desires, he should be given an opportunity to achieve further independence through vocational training and placement programs. The individual who is blind is capable, with proper training, of participation in normal work activities. His abilities to achieve in the vocational world will vary with his individual characteristics such as intelligence, manual dexterity, and mental hygiene.

Because of the philosophy that a person should be given an opportunity to reach his maximum potential from a social, vocational, and psychological standpoint, it is my feeling that workshops for the blind, such as the Lions Industries for the Blind in Durham, are a necessity. This philosophy is different from the philosophy of several states because generally workshop employment is considered as sheltered employment. I believe that if the individual who is blind and has additional handicaps such as mental retardation, even though he cannot produce at a sufficient level to compete in industry, should be allowed to produce as much as he is capable. Well-managed workshops with well-trained personnel do not have profit incentives and can give employment to an individual who is blind and cannot meet the minimum standards required by industry; however, only after it is determined that he cannot compete in private industry should he be placed in a workshop.

A comprehensive service program should also have the ability to provide individuals who are blind with economic security through money payments. These money payments should be available to individuals who cannot, because of some factor such as age, earn their own livelihood.

It is also my feeling that more and more comprehensive adjustment services should be taken to the community and that individuals should not be displaced in order to receive these services. These services should be available for the elderly as well as for individuals who are entering a habilitation or rehabilitation program.

I also believe that a program of services for the blind should be developed with consumer participation. There are several organizations of and for the blind in this State; and since I became Director of this Division, I have tried to involve these organizations and individuals outside of these organizations in program planning and program implementation. In other words, we should be working not only with consumer groups but with clients rather than for clients. When an agency working with the blind considers itself professional to the extent that it knows what is the best plan for a person and does not involve that person in the self-actualization, that agency is perpetuating itself rather than helping people to help themselves. Our society not only has a responsibility to the individuals who are blind, but also the individual who are blind have a responsibility to society. If the people who are blind are to achieve first-class citizenship and accept responsibility, they must be given the opportunity to participate in the development of a service program and, in addition, the individuals who are receiving services must have the opportunity to participate in the development of their plan of services. I think such a program is necessary if we as blind individuals are to begin to see ourselves more and more as individuals who can contribute to society rather than to receive from society and expect more and more services that a well-adjusted blind individual can provide for himself. In other words, I am talking about a program that can provide the individual who is blind with dignity and the ability to feel that he has achieved first-class citizenship.

I hope that the above statements will acquaint you to some extent where we are. We have the nucleus of a program that can subscribe to the philosophy that I have indicated. We have very liberal rehabilitation and social services programs. Our sight conservation and blindness prevention program for adults has not kept pace with the cost of living index and is not, in my opinion, very liberal. There are people losing their vision simply because they cannot afford regular eye examinations.

INTRODUCED BY:

APPENDIX V

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A CONSUMER AND ADVOCACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR
3 THE BLIND.
4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:
5 Section 1. Part 9 of Article 3 of Chapter 143B of the
6 General Statutes is hereby repealed and in its place is substituted
7 the following:
8 "Part 9. Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee
9 for the Blind.
10 § 143B-163. Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the
11 Blind--creation, powers and duties.--(a) There is hereby created
12 the Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the Blind of the
13 Department of Human Resources.
14
15 (b) The Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the Blind
16 shall advise all State boards, commissions, agencies, divisions,
17 departments, schools, corporations, or other State-administered
18 associations or entities, including the Secretary, director and
19 members of said boards, commissions, agencies, divisions,
20 departments, schools, et cetera, on the needs of the citizens of
21 the State of North Carolina who are now or will become visually
22 handicapped or impaired.
23 (c) The Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the Blind
24 shall also advise every State board, commission, agency, division,

1 department, school, corporation, or other State-administered
2 associations or entity concerning sight conservation programs
3 that it supervises, administers or controls.

4 (d) All State boards, commissions, agencies, divisions,
5 departments, schools, corporations, or other State-administered
6 associations or entities including the secretary, director and
7 members of said State boards, agencies, departments, et cetera,
8 which supervise, administer or control any program for or
9 affecting the citizens of the State of North Carolina who are now
10 or will become visually handicapped or impaired shall inform the
11 Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the Blind of any
12 proposed change in policy, program, budget, rule, or regulation
13 which will affect the citizens of North Carolina who are now or
14 will become visually handicapped or impaired. Said board,
15 commission, et cetera, shall allow the Consumer and Advocacy
16 Advisory Committee for the Blind, prior to passage, unless such
17 change is made pursuant to G.S. 150A-13, an opportunity to object
18 to the change and present information and proposals on behalf of
19 the citizens of North Carolina who are now or will become visually
20 handicapped or impaired. This subsection shall also apply to all
21 sight conservation programs of the State of North Carolina.

22 (e) Nothing in this statute shall prohibit a board, commission,
23 agency, division, department, et cetera, from implementing any change
24 after allowing the Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the
25 Blind an opportunity to object and propose alternatives.

26 § 143B-164. Consumer and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the
27 Blind--members; selection; quorum; compensation.--(a) The Consumer
28 and Advocacy Advisory Committee for the Blind of the Department of

- 1 Human Resources shall consist of the following members:
National
- 2 (1) President and Vice President of the/Federation of
3 the Blind of North Carolina;
- 4 (2) President and Vice President of the North Carolina
5 Council of the Blind;
- 6 (3) President and Vice President of the North Carolina
7 Association of Workers for the Blind;
- 8 (4) President and Vice President of the North Carolina
9 Chapter of the American Association of Workers for
10 the Blind;
- 11 (5) Chairman of the State Council of the North Carolina Lions
12 and Executive Director of the North Carolina Lions
13 Association for the Blind, Inc.;
- 14 (6) Chairman of the Concession Stand Committee of the
15 Division of Services for the Blind of the Department
16 of Human Resources;
- 17 (7) Executive Director of the North Carolina Society for the
18 Prevention of Blindness, Inc.

19 Provided, each officeholder shall serve on the committee only
20 so long as he holds the named position in the specified organization
21 Upon completion of his term, failure to secure reelection or
22 appointment, or resignation, the individual shall be deemed to have
23 resigned from the committee and his successor in office shall
24 immediately become a member of the committee.

25 Provided, further, if any of the above organizations dissolve or
26 if any of the above-stated positions no longer exist, then the
27 successor organization or position shall be deemed to be substituted
28 in the place of the former one and the officeholder in the new

1 organization or of the new position shall become a member of
2 the committee.

3 (b) A chairman shall be elected by a majority vote of the
4 committee members for a one-year term to coincide with the
5 fiscal year of the State. Provided, the first chairman shall
6 be elected for a term to end June 30, 1978.

7 Provided further, if any chairman does not desire or is unable
8 to continue to perform as chairman for any reason, including his
9 becoming ineligible to be a member of the committee as specified
10 in subsection (a), the remaining members shall elect a chairman
11 to fulfill the remainder of his term.

12 (c) A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum for
13 the transaction of business.

14 (d) The committee shall meet once a quarter to act upon any
15 information provided them by any board, commission, agency,
16 division, department, school, et cetera. Special meetings may be
17 held at any time and place within the State at the call of the
18 chairman or upon written request of at least a majority of the
19 members. Provided, a majority of the members shall be allowed to
20 waive any meeting.

21 (e) All clerical and other services required by the committee
22 shall be supplied by the Secretary of Human Resources.

23 (f) Members of the committee shall receive per diem and
24 necessary travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the
25 provisions of G.S. 138-5."

26 Sec. 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 1977.
27
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